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ABSTRACT

The author of this document found through independent research that many language arts teachers had background information in the area of integrated programs but were largely unable to follow through in constructing and implementing such a program. In order to both increase background knowledge and aid in developing methods of application, the author conducted a summer workshop, meeting four hours per day for five and one-half weeks at a local middle school, using instruments that revealed to the individual teacher the extent of background knowledge and the strengths and weaknesses of prior professional experience. Following the use of the test, a one-to-one conference was held to reach decisions regarding the teacher's needs, and learning objectives were determined. Each session began with a group meeting (discussion study material) and lectures and demonstrations. Following a coffee and shoptalk break, each teacher worked individually or in small groups while the professor talked individually with each participant. Outside resource persons and off-site work were also utilized. Class participation in a state-level conference on teaching language arts was attended as a professional improvement project. Summative conferences were held with each participating teacher, during which techniques for implementing materials and curricula prepared during the workshop were discussed. The final day of the workshop consisted of a share-and-borrow exhibit, in which participants studied each other's completed work and implementation plans. Although no hard data on the effects of the workshop exist, changes in background information level and evidence of actual successful application of that knowledge in middle grade/middle school level classrooms do indicate that the workshop was successful in meeting its objectives. (MB)

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FROM INSERVICE TO IMPLEMENTATION: THE INTEGRATED LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL STUDENTS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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The responsibilities of an effective reading-language arts teacher have been categorized by Ruddell (1974) into three major areas. The first area, that of background knowledge and understanding, has to do with information, which is of great importance in constructing and operating a curriculum in the classroom. The next, that of applied knowledge and understanding, comprises methods and procedures for meeting the needs of individual youngsters. The last area, interaction and understanding, includes direct involvement in the instructional program as student, school, and community relationships are developed. In discussing the three, Ruddell points out the importance of recognizing the interrelationships among them.

Similarly, Callaway, McDaniel, and Mason (1972) have discussed commonly recognized separate dimensions of the language arts program (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and then drawn attention through their research and their reporting of it to the interrelationships among the four. In a study involving thirty classrooms of children and several experimental situations they found, for instance, that direct teaching of spelling words not necessarily met in reading or used in composition was associated with significantly lower scores in spelling, while supplemental instruction in composition involving developing stories related to the content of the basal

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readers being used was much more successful in stimulating mastery of spelling patterns and significantly boosted total reading vocabulary scores and mastery of written language conventions, as well. The overall conclusion of their study was that achievement in the language arts is increased when the instructional program in any one of those language arts is carefully correlated and integrated with the instructional program in the other language arts. Marquardt (1974), Brubaker (1975), and Neinsted (1975) make equally convincing cases for the integration of instruction in the English language arts, and indeed the personal observations of many classroom teachers, including those of the writer, confirm the advantages of the integrated language arts curriculum. At the same time, in an informal survey in 1974 of inservice teachers involved in a graduate level course in teaching the language arts the writer determined that 80% of the teachers, while they intellectually agreed with the logic of an integrated language arts curriculum, had not attempted to design or implement such a curriculum in their classrooms and had only vague ideas of how they might go about it. Their general conception of the manner in which this might be done was one of tacking on to an assignment in one of the language arts assignments in the others as given in their respective texts. Though time and attention were devoted in the class to exploring other possibilities, the impression of the writer at its conclusion was that most teachers involved, while they now had more ideas of the why and how of the integrated language arts curriculum, did not have a plan for actually designing and then implementing such a curriculum in their classrooms.

A spot checking during the 1974-75 academic year confirmed this. Teachers contacted had developed background knowledge understanding of the integrated language arts curriculum, but had not been able to accomplish the translation or application of this knowledge in their work with actual children in teaching situations. Reasons cited included a lack of time, the absence of supportive feedback, and, in some cases, a lack of support from the local school administration. In both the original survey conducted in the language arts class and the follow-through spot checking, the writer observed that the difficulty in conceiving and implementing an integrated language arts program appeared even greater for middle and upper grade teachers than for those working at the primary level. As teachers at middle and upper grade levels interacted with their students, texts, and over all school curriculum they found themselves largely unable to follow through on a desire to manage the "situational givens" (James, 1976) of their teaching assignment and implement an integrated language arts curriculum. This observation regarding middle and upper grade level teachers involved in the course, survey, and follow-through spot checking procedure, added to similar observations of the writer of middle and upper grade level language arts teachers in three states and over a several years period of time, stimulated her conceiving, designing, and offering in the Summer of 1975 a ten quarter hour graduate level curriculum workshop in reading/language arts education at the middle grades/middle school level. That curriculum workshop, and the design and implementation of integrated language arts

curricula which evolved as a result of experiences of teachers involved in the workshop, will be discussed in the remainder of this paper and this conference session.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP AND STEPS WHICH WERE TAKEN

The objectives of the workshop can be deduced from the preceeding discussion. Primarily, they were 1) to help each teacher involved increase his/her background knowledge and understanding of reading and language arts associated content appropriate to middle grade/middle school level students and of the possible nature of integrated language arts curricula and experiences for this age group and 2) to help each teacher involved prepare to develop and apply through appropriate methods and procedures an integrated language arts curriculum in meeting the needs of their individual students. In an effort to realize these objectives, the following steps were taken:

1. The two "courses" comprising the ten quarter hour workshop were offered only in a block of time arrangement; no teacher involved took only one half of the ten quarter hour block. Likewise the workshop met daily, four hours per day for five and one-half weeks. This arrangement permitted more extensive and intensive work on the part of the professor with each teacher.
2. The workshop was conducted in a middle school facility located near Georgia State University in a spacious area which included a storage room where the professor could keep many personal teaching materials and learning resources for the use of the teachers.
3. The professor prepared an instrument the intent of which was to

reveal to the individual teacher responding to questions on it and to the professor the extent of background knowledge the teacher possessed as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher's prior professional experiences. Following the use of the instrument a one-to-one conference with each teacher was held and tentative decisions of both the teacher and professor with regards to that teacher's needs and learning objectives were reached and recorded.

4. A structure for workshop sessions was derived and initiated. Each morning's work began with a total group session which consisted of a discussion of what was being studied by the group as a whole and of lectures and demonstrations. Following that there was an informal coffee and shoptalk break during which participants shared with one another what they were doing as they pursued their individual studies and moved toward designing their own teaching materials and integrated language arts curriculum. During the last half of each morning teachers worked individually or in small groups utilizing listening stations, teaching materials, reference books, materials production areas, and quiet work spaces, and the professor talked individually with them about their work and their progress. Outside resource people were brought in on several occasions, and teachers involved sometimes went off-site for some of their work in order to accomplish some of their personal objectives. Likewise, several of the teachers became resource

people for other class members as they too conducted workshop sessions and demonstrations.

5. Class participation in a state level conference on teaching the English language arts seemed to be of interest and was undertaken as a professional improvement project. More than 2/3 of the teachers in the workshop attended their first language arts oriented professional conference. Each returned with new teaching ideas pertinent to the integrated language arts curriculum at the middle grades/middle school level and/or with greater insight into their own past teaching experiences.

6. The professor held a summative evaluation conference with each participating teacher during which techniques for fully implementing materials and curricula prepared during the workshop in view of local school "situational givens" were discussed.

7. On the final morning of the workshop a "share and borrow" exhibit was set up and participants studied each other's completed work and plans for implementation of the work in classroom teaching situations.

Participants in the workshop also contributed to a summative evaluation of the workshop experience itself.

SUMMARY COMMENTS

Follow-through data on workshop participants, though not possible to obtain in every case, indicated substantial personal professional growth, a definite increase in the incidence of integrated language arts

materials and curricula actually implemented in the classroom, and the positive response of middle grade/middle school students to the newly implemented materials and curricula.

"Hard data" on the long term effects of the ten quarter hour workshop do not exist, but changes in teacher background knowledge concerning both reading/language arts programs for middle grade/middle school level students and the design and implementation of integrated language arts materials and curricula at this level, as well as evidence of actual successful application of this knowledge in middle grade/middle school level classrooms, is nonetheless "in," and real.

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